

Serial No. 10/725,083
Reply to Office Action dated August 24, 2005

Docket No. STINN-0001-US

Amendments to the Specification:

Please replace the specification with the substitute specification included in the appendix. The substitute specification does not contain any new matter that was not disclosed in the original, unamended specification.

Attachment: Substitute Specification

Substitute Specification:

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

[0001] This invention relates generally to the field of container coverings and, more specifically, to the field of trash can coverings.

BACKGROUND

[0002] It is generally well known that trash container and receptacles, specifically those which a user would leave outside of their home, have lids or coverings. These lids and coverings typically act to serve a variety of purposes. First, the covering seeks to prevent potentially offensive odors from escaping the trash container. These odors are not only unpleasant to smell, but may also attract local wildlife, such as squirrels and raccoons, who may attempt to access the trash in the container and use it as a source of food. The lid thus serves the additional function of preventing wildlife from accessing the garbage housed in the container. Further, the lid or covering can act to prevent the elements from reaching the contents of the container. The lid prevents rain water from entering the container, which could cause further spoilage of the refuse as well as potentially filling the container with undesired water, which could also add weight to the container, rendering it more difficult to move or lift.

[0003] Traditional trash container lids have a variety of problems, however. Lids are susceptible to being broken or

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removed, rendering them non-functional for their intended task. A problem exists when a gust of wind, for example, blows a trash container over, removing the lid in the process. The lid may also be displaced by a wild animal searching for food or may not be properly replaced by trash removal personnel. Thus the trash container can be left without a lid and the refuse it houses is left open to both wildlife and the elements.

[0004] A further problem with traditional trash container lids is that once they are removed from the container, they frequently become lost or otherwise unusable, it is difficult to obtain a replacement. When a lid is removed from a container by a gust of wind or otherwise, it is often blown a distance from the container, making it difficult for the owner of the container to locate. Additionally, due to the prevalence of lids being lost and the uniformity of size of most garbage containers, other people who find a displaced lid often keep it for use on their own trash containers.

[0005] The problem of losing a trash container lid or covering is further exacerbated for the original owner of the trash container due to the difficulty in obtaining a replacement lid. Because lids and containers are typically sold together, an individual seeking to obtain a replacement lid must either purchase a new trash can and lid combination or forgo the use of a lid. It is usually undesirable to purchase a new container and lid due to the fact that the buyer will then have an extra

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trash can without a lid. Otherwise, if the person chooses to not purchase a replacement trash container and lid, they will be forced to leave their refuse open to the elements and wildlife, which is an undesirable situation for both the owner of the open container and potentially for their neighbors.

SUMMARY

[0006] In one embodiment of the invention, a plastic cover having an elastic band positioned at the bottom of the cover is used to cover an open container. The cover may be used to cover and seal such containers as trashcans or any other open object. Further, due to the elastic band in the cover, the cover may be used to protect other items from outside elements.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0007] Embodiments of the present invention will become more fully understood from the detailed description and the accompanying drawings, wherein:

[0008] Fig. 1 is a collapsed view of a container cover.

[0009] Fig. 2 is an expanded view of a container cover.

[0010] Fig. 3 is an inverted view of a container cover.

[0011] Fig. 4 is an exemplary diagram of a container cover on a cylindrical trash can.

[0012] Fig. 5 is an exemplary diagram of a container cover on a square-shaped trash can.

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[0013] Fig. 6 is an exemplary diagram of a container cover on a bush.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

[0014] Aspects of the invention are disclosed in the following description and related drawings directed to specific embodiments of the invention. Alternate embodiments may be devised without departing from the spirit or the scope of the invention. Additionally, well-known elements of exemplary embodiments of the invention will not be described in detail or will be omitted so as not to obscure the relevant details of the invention. Further, to facilitate an understanding of the description, discussion of several terms used herein follows.

[0015] The word "exemplary" is used herein to mean "serving as an example, instance, or illustration." Any embodiment described herein as "exemplary" is not necessarily to be construed as preferred or advantageous over other embodiments. Likewise, the term "embodiments of the invention" does not require that all embodiments of the invention include the discussed feature, advantage or mode of operation.

[0016] Referring generally to Figs. 1-6, a disposable plastic cover is disclosed. The covering may be utilized in any of a variety of functions, such as closing and temporarily sealing containers.

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[0017] Fig. 1 shows a collapsed view of a disposable plastic cover 2. Because cover 2 may be formed of a variety of plastics, it may be stored in a small box or container. Additionally, cover 2 is formed so as to be stored in a collapsed manner with many other covers of the same type. Cover 2 may further have elastic band 4 located at a bottom portion of the cover. Elastic band 4 can be expandable, for example, up to about 1020mm in order to fit over containers having openings of up to about 1020mm. Cover 2 also has an area where two plastic sheets may be heat sealed together to form handle 6, which may act as a handle for a user who desired to remove cover 2 from a container. Additionally, the area where two plastic sheets may be heat sealed together to form handle 6 further acts to seal one side of cover 2 so as to prevent any solids, liquids or gases from escaping through cover 2 when it is being used to seal and cover a container.

[0018] In a further embodiment, cover 2 may be made of polyethylene sheets of plastic. Additionally, elastic band 4 made be made of any multi-sizeable, multi-shapeable band or cord having the ability to hold snugly to a container or item to be covered. Additionally, the plastic formation of the covers may allow a large number of them to be packaged together for sale and provides easy storage capabilities for covers that are not in use.

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[0019] In yet a further embodiment, cover 2 may be made with two sheets of about 2.0mm polyethylene plastic, about 910mm to 1020mm in width and about 450mm to 610mm in height. An about 25mm hem can be heat sealed along the bottom of both sheets. The two sheets can be placed together and heat sealed along the sides to make one item. The top can then be gathered by making 50mm folds in an alternate pattern. Each fold can heat sealed to hold the top together. The folded top can be about 64mm from the sealed portion. The gathered folds may be formed so as to provide a handle which a user may utilize in any of a variety of manners. Inserted into the hem may be elastic cord 4 which can be a 280mm to 305mm piece of elastic cord less than 2mm in diameter on each side of the sheets. Elastic cord 4 may be stretched to its full elasticity and heat sealed at the ends of the cord and to the hems on each side of the cover. The elastic cord may stretch to about 1020mm around, allowing a variety of sizes and shapes of containers to be covered. The about 450mm to 510mm depth can allow for overflow of contents that may be within the container. Thus, cover 2 may be used for trash cans ranging in various sizes, from small, medium to large.

[0020] Fig. 2 shows an inverted and expanded view of cover 2. Here, elastic band 2 is shown in its expanded form where it could be fitted over the open top of a container. Fig. 3 is an inverted view of Fig. 2, where elastic band 4 is expanded and

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the folded area is shown in the upward fashion so that it could be used as a handle 6 to remove cover 2 from a container.

[0021] Fig. 4 shows an exemplary embodiment where cover 2 is disposed on cylindrical trash container 8. In this embodiment a user may grasp cover 2 and expand the bottom portion of the cover using elastic band 4. The elasticity of elastic band 4 allows it to fit over the open portion of trash container 8. Additionally, after elastic band 4 of cover 2 is placed over the opening of trash container 8, elastic band 4 contracts and acts as a seal between outside elements and the interior contents of trash container 8.

[0022] Fig. 5 is another embodiment of the invention where cover 2 may be utilized to cover alternative shapes and contents of a container. In this embodiment a square-shaped trash container 10 is shown. Trash container 10 is filled with items that extend beyond the brim of the trash container. Cover 2, however, may still be used to cover trash container 10. Elastic band 4 of cover 2 may be used to form a seal around the square-shaped opening of trash container 10. Additionally, due to the size and pliable nature of cover 2, the contents of trash container 10 which extend beyond the brim of the container may still be fully covered, sealing in the contents of the container and preventing outside elements from reaching the contents of the container. In a further embodiment of the invention, cover 2 may be adapted to fit over any size or shape container that is

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within the elasticity limits of elastic band 4. Further, cover 2 may fit over any objects protruding from a container provided that the objects do not protrude higher than the maximum height of cover 2 that allows elastic band 4 to be secured around an upper portion of a container.

[0023] Fig. 6 shows a further embodiment of the invention where cover 2 may be used to cover shrubbery or bushes, for example, when a frost is imminent or when they may otherwise need to be covered. Additionally, in other embodiments of the invention, cover 2 may be used to cover other household items that require protection. For example, cover 2 may be used to cover framed paintings and portraits in a house or on a wall when a house is being painted.

[0024] The foregoing description and accompanying drawings illustrate the principles, preferred embodiments and modes of operation of the invention. However, the invention should not be construed as being limited to the particular embodiments discussed above. Additional variations of the embodiments discussed above will be appreciated by those skilled in the art.

[0025] Therefore, the above-described embodiments should be regarded as illustrative rather than restrictive. Accordingly, it should be appreciated that variations to those embodiments can be made by those skilled in the art without departing from the scope of the invention as defined by the following claims.